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ABSTRACT

Reasons that students enter or leave the University of Montana (UM) were studied in fall 1983. Consideration was given to first-term freshmen of traditional age, slightly older students (under age 25), transfer students, dropouts, and students who persisted at the university for 1 academic year. In study phase 1, attention was directed to characteristics of freshmen, their perceptions of the university, and enrollment influences. Phase 2, which was aimed at students in the original sample who had left the university, investigated reasons for leaving and what dropouts selected as alternatives to the university. Finally, the third phase studied persisters' attitudes in order to provide a comparison control group. Information is included on demographic characteristics of students, living arrangements, employment status, grade point average, students' perceptions of their academic potential, students' positive and negative experiences at UM, attitudes toward advising, impressions of campus offices, sense of involvement with UM, and persisters' future plans and attitudes toward UM. Differences between persisters and leavers are tabulated. A description of the study methodology and questionnaires for and enrollment phases 1, 2, and 3 are provided. (SW)

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ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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The University of Montana

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August, 1984

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In 1982 the Planning Council of the University of Montana awarded an institution grant to study factors related to the retention of students at UM. A Retention Research Committee had been formed to brainstorm issues associated with concerns of student persistence. The committee membership consisted of upper and middle management level administrators responsible for various aspects of enrollment maintenance.

The committee decided upon a research design and then turned the project over to the Offices of Advising and Retention (OAR). Under the direction of the OAR coordinator and with the assistance of the chair of the Department of Management in the School of Business, a research team was formed to develop three individual survey instruments. A sample of new students was identified from the entering class of Autumn 1983.

The Phase I survey was developed and mailed to the sample in early December of 1983. The purpose of the Phase I instrument was to gather information that might help the University both to characterize new freshmen and to ascertain those reasons that typically attract students to enroll at UM. Additionally, Phase I sought to identify students' perceptions of their own abilities to succeed in college, their established attitudes (both positive and negative) toward the University, and the extent to which they had begun to identify with UM.

In Phase II of the study, a second questionnaire was developed. Designed to be used for telephone interviewing, the Phase II instrument was aimed at those students in the original sample who had left the University at some point after autumn quarter. The research team was interested to learn if

students who leave UM at different times during the academic calendar give different reasons for going. To answer this question, Phase II was broken into two parts: the IIa interviews were conducted with students who were enrolled autumn but not winter quarter, the IIb interviews were with students enrolled both autumn and winter but not spring quarter.

Another question raised was "were 'leavers' who responded to the mailed Phase I questionnaire likely to have reasons for leaving that differed from those of leavers who did not respond to the Phase I survey?" To answer this question it was decided to include both respondents and nonrespondents from Phase I in the Phase II telephone interviews of leavers.

Phase II essentially asked former students why they had left the University of Montana. It inquired as to when and how such decisions are made and sought to learn what it is that leavers turn to as alternatives to education at UM.

Although some items had to be dropped, altered, or added to make it workable, the Phase III instrument was veritably a replication of the Phase II telephone interview. Phase III interviews, however, were conducted to generate data on a control group. These telephone interviews were with students from the original sample (both respondents and nonrespondents to Phase I) who had persisted throughout the entire academic year, enrolling and attending classes autumn, winter, and spring quarters, 1983-84. The interviews were conducted in June, 1983.

These "persisters" were asked if and when they intended to return to UM and if their intentions for the completion of a degree had changed since first matriculating. Phase III also inquired of the persisters as to whether or not their attitudes toward the University had changed over the course of a school year. Their impressions were sought on many aspects of academic

life found to be associated with the type of student discontent that can result in attrition. Finally, this group was asked if they had considered leaving during the school year and, if so, what had kept them from doing so.

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

PHASE I -- THE INITIAL SAMPLING OF NEW STUDENTS

The Phase I questionnaire netted 340 usable responses from a mailing of 600 surveys, for a 57% response rate. The sample population of 600 had been stratified to represent three groups:

Group #	% of Respondents
1 -- Nontraditional (older) students	25%
2 -- First-term freshmen	48%
3 -- Transfer students	27%
	100%

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following summarizes some demographic characteristics of the respondents to Phase I.

- Sex -- Males 46%, Females 54%.
- Marital Status -- Greater than 82% of the respondents were single with no dependents.
- Age -- The range was 17 to 66 years of age, the median was 20 years, the mean was 23.
- Ethnicity -- Caucasian 92%, Native American 5%, Hispanic 2%, Oriental 1%.
- Veteran Status -- Nonveterans 94%, Veterans 6%.
- Residency -- Residents 71%, Nonresidents 29%.
- Transfer Status -- New students 57%, Transfer students 43%.
- High School Graduation -- Greater than 66% had been granted a high school diploma or its equivalent within the last three years.
- Major -- Respondents were representative of the typical spread of majors at UM.
- Home Town Size -- Less than 2,000 20%, Less than 20,000 49%, Less than 50,000 64%, 50,000 and greater 36%.
- Parents' Education -- At least one parent graduated from college 48%, Neither parent graduated from college 51%, Do not know 1%.
- Students' Income -- Gross earnings less than $3,000 47%, Gross earnings less than $6,000 60%, 21% either did not know or did not respond to this item.

Living Arrangements -- These individuals were asked to provide information about their living quarters while at UM. Table 1 presents their responses. An interesting observation is that 86% were content with their living arrangements after one quarter's enrollment. Only 14% indicated that they would not choose the same arrangements again. The reasons most frequently cited for choosing the same living quarters again were, in this order, convenience, the reasonableness of the rent, and the opportunity to make new acquaintances.

Table 1. Respondents' Living Quarters at UM

	Frequency	Percent
Residence Hall	197	57.9
Family Housing	18	5.3
Off Campus, Less than 10 Mi.	108	31.8
Off Campus, More than 10 Mi.	17	5.0
TOTALS	340	100.0

Familiarity with Campus -- A significant majority, 79% had visited the campus prior to registration. Table 2 presents occasions given by respondents for coming to campus.

Table 2. Occasions Given for Visiting the UM Campus

	Frequency	Percent
Informal Visit	157	25.0
College Athletic Events	73	11.6
Performing Arts	70	11.1
Summer Orientation	65	10.4
High School Athletic Events	64	10.2
UM Days	61	9.7
Fall Orientation	60	9.6
Academic Department-Sponsored Activities or Programs	29	4.6
Visits Sponsored by Admissions Office	20	3.2
Attend Events That Were Not University Affiliated	7	1.1
Athletic Requirement	7	1.1
Open-to-Public Events of the University	5	0.8
Other	10	1.6
TOTAL RESPONSES GIVEN	628	100.0

Employment Status -- Almost half (48%) of the respondents indicated that they had sought employment during autumn quarter. Seventy-four percent of those job seekers actually did obtain employment during that time. More than a third of those employed found jobs on campus. A full 80% were able to confine themselves to jobs that averaged only 20 hours per week or less, an average from the literature found to be associated with student retention.

Grade Point Data -- Eighty percent of the respondents were registered as full-time students autumn quarter, ranging from 12 to 18 credits attempted. Of these, 78% completed a full-time load of from 12 to 18 credits earned. Of the 340 respondents, 23% earned less than 2.0 GPA. However, 34% earned an autumn quarter GPA ranging from a 2.0 to 3.0, and 43% earned a 3.0 or better that term.

Why Students Choose UM

In an open-ended question, respondents were asked why they selected the University of Montana over other institutions. Most students gave more than one reason for their choice. Those who did not apply to out-of-state colleges gave one of these most frequently cited reasons noted in this hierarchical order:

(1) UM offers the desired programs or courses of study.
(2) UM is within good proximity to home.
(3) The lifestyle and the features of the community and of Montana are desirable.
(4) The good reputation of the University is a consideration.

Those who did apply to out-of-state colleges ultimately chose UM over the others because of these most often cited reasons, noted in order of frequency:

(1) UM offers the desired programs or courses of study.
(2) The good reputation of the University is a consideration.
(3) The lifestyle and the features of the community and of Montana are desirable.

Others do appear to have influence over new students' decisions to attend the University. Parents, UM students and high school friends were the three most frequently cited groups of influence wielders.

At a later point in the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to select from a list the three factors that were the most influential in their decisions to come to UM. The items most frequently cited were:

(1) Academic major.
(2) Family member's advice.
(3) Costs of getting an education at UM relative to the other schools that were considered.
(4) Geographic location of Missoula.
(5) Easy commuting distance from home.
(6) Academic reputation of UM.

Students' Perceptions of Their Own Abilities to Succeed

Respondents were asked if they had participated in the Freshman Skills Assessment Program (FSAP) prior to autumn registration. A full 65% of them had indeed taken these placement tests in reading ability, writing skills, and mathematics. Of those test takers, 41% did not believe that the test results were an accurate reflection of their abilities. The most frequently cited reasons for this were (in heirarchical order):

(1) The tests were an insufficient sampling of the students' abilities.
(2) The tests' objectives were thought to be questionable.
(3) The students' skills being tested were rusty from disuse.
(4) The testing conditions were poor -- rooms were too hot, too crowded.
(5) There was no time to prepare for these tests.
(6) Students' questioned their own abilities to succeed.

Table 3 illustrates the percentage of test takers who were recommended to enroll in remedial (basic) courses in reading, writing, and math. It also presents information on the percent of students who either have or intend to take such classes. In some cases, students who were encouraged to enroll in remedial level classes were unable to do so due to closed sections. This happened 12% of the time.

Table 3. Remedial Courses Recommended* vs. Remedial Courses Taken or Will Be Taken

	Remedial Courses Recommended	Remedial Courses Taken or Will Be Taken
Reading, Educ. 002, 195	11%	17%
Writing, Engl. 102	25%	21%
Mathematics, Math 001, 002	36%	35%

*(There appears to be a discrepancy between this self-report data and actual FSAP records, e.g. the autumn 1984 writing sample results had actually recommended 50% of the test takers into Engl. 102.)

Students' Positive and Negative Experiences at UM

In an open-ended question respondents were asked to report their most rewarding experience since first enrolling at the University. The most often cited reasons are listed in descending order of frequency below:

(1) Meeting new people and making new friends.
(2) Learning new things about self, various disciplines, the world.
(3) Being on one's own and responsible for self, changing one's lifestyle.
(4) Having the chance to become involved in new activities.

With less frequency, but still worthy of note were these other "rewarding experiences": the realization of personal or academic goals and the accompanying sense of accomplishment, the behavior of instructors and advisors who were perceived to be helpful, accessible, and inspiring, and the efforts of various UM offices and activities that attempted to help students make a smooth transition to the campus.

In another open-ended question respondents were asked to report their most unfavorable experience at UM. In descending order of frequency the most often cited reasons given were:

(1) Coming to terms with the realities of their new situations: adjusting to academic, physical, personal, and social expectations and resolving role conflicts.
(2) Dissatisfaction with courses: the content, instructors, teaching assistants, or grades.
(3) Unpleasant personal experiences unrelated to academic life, e.g. accidents, allergies, thefts.
(4) Unhelpful behavior on the part of a campus representative, e.g. advisor, instructor, dean or office.

Complaints were also leveled at some of the more expected sources of discontent -- the campus facilities, dorm living, financial aids, and the food service. However, such citations of dissatisfaction were much more infrequent than had been anticipated.

Student Attitudes Toward Advising

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were indeed able to name their academic advisor. Seventy-eight percent of these students had met with their advisor at least once autumn quarter (40% had done so two or more times). These 254 students were asked to rate their attitudes toward a dozen statements describing personal experiences with advising. Table 4 presents a summary of those responses.

Table 4. Attitudes Towards Academic Advising

		Percent of Respondents' Answers to Each Item				
		Least Accurate				Most Accurate
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	My advisor helps me define and develop realistic goals	13	14	32	25	17
b.	My advisor identifies special needs and suggests other people or offices from whom I can seek help	16	13	25	23	22
c.	My advisor helps with course scheduling	5	10	11	30	49
d.	My advisor discusses linkage between academic preparation and career opportunities	15	17	25	28	15
e.	My advisor seems relaxed during our meetings	4	6	8	24	58
f.	My advisor makes me feel confortable during our meetings	6	7	12	26	50
g.	My advisor encourages me to ask questions	7	13	27	26	27
h.	My advisor has been easy to see	9	9	30	23	30
i.	My advisor helped me pick courses appropriate to my abilities and needs	10	11	16	32	31
j.	My advisor has the final say as to which classes I will take	37	22	24	12	5
k.	Having a good advisor to work with is important to me	5	4	11	16	64
l.	Overall, I consider my advisor a good advisor	6	8	17	25	49

In summary, respondents tend to support, from a moderate to an extensive perspective, the following statements:

	Percent Agreeing
• Advisors are helping students to delineate realistic goals	74%
• Advisors are identifying special needs and providing appropriate referrals	70%
• Advisors are assisting with course scheduling	90%
• Advisors are helping students to connect course work with career opportunities	68%
• Advisors are creating a relaxed advising atmosphere	90%
• Advisors are helping students feel comfortable with advising	88%
• Advisors are encouraging students to ask questions	80%
• Advisors have been accessible	83%
• Advisors are helping students select appropriate courses	79%
• Students perceive that course selection is ultimately their own decision to make	83%
• Students place great importance on working with a good advisor	91%
• Students consider their advisor to be a good advisor	91%

Students' Impressions of Campus Offices

Table 5 presents information on which of UM's various offices the respondents tended to have used by the end of autumn quarter. The first column indicates the percent of the total respondents indicating they had indeed used the office. The second and third columns indicate the degree to which the users had expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the personnel encountered at these sites. These two columns do not always sum to 100% as in many cases respondents themselves either checked neither column or both columns two and three.

Table 5. Percent of Respondents Using Campus Offices and Their Reactions to Them

	Percent Who Have Used This Office	Percent of Users Who Found the People in This Office Helpful	Percent of Users Who Found the People in This Office Not Helpful
Academic Department Office (Department of Student's Major)	43%	93%	5%
Advising Office, Lodge	23%	100%	4%
Admissions Office, Lodge	60%	94%	5%
Career Services Office, Lodge	8%	77%	19%
Center for Student Development Counseling Office, Lodge	15%	86%	20%
Dean's Office (Dean of Student's Major)	13%	84%	16%
Financial Aid Office, Lodge	44%	85%	15%
Food Service Office, Lodge	44%	88%	10%
Housing Office, Turner Hall	19%	85%	12%
Reading Lab, Main Hall	5%	67%	11%
Registrar's Office, Lodge	50%	92%	8%
Special Services Office, Arthur and Beckwith	7%	83%	17%
Tutoring Office, Lodge	7%	65%	22%

Students' Sense of Involvement with UM

The extent to which a new student develops a sense of belonging to or identification with the University has a bearing on the retention of that student. To determine the degree to which this was developing among the sample, the respondents were asked to answer an open-ended question explaining why they either were or were not beginning to feel involved at UM.

By the end of their first quarter at UM, 63% of the respondents reported that they were beginning to feel involved with campus life. The three most frequently cited reasons for this were:

(1) Joining in: clubs, Greek life, other organizations, and physical activities.

(2) Meeting people and classmates.

(3) Becoming involved with academia: with classes and instructors, in studies, in their major.

Eleven percent of the respondents did not indicate one way or the other whether they were identifying with features of campus life. However, 24% were certain they were not. The most frequently given reasons were:

(1) A "no" response with no elaboration.

(2) No involvement yet, but perhaps the future would allow for that.

(3) They were not spending enough time on campus to become involved.

(4) There was too much studying to do to permit that to happen.

PHASE II -- TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH LEAVERS

At the close of registration for winter quarter '84, it was determined that there were 1,202 students who had enrolled autumn but not winter. Of those, 7%, or 90 former students, had been included in the original Phase I sample pool of 600. Of those 90 leavers, 30 (33%) were Phase I respondents and 60 (67%) were Phase I nonrespondents. When spring quarter '84 registration closed, there were 700 students who had not reenrolled after attending both the preceding autumn and winter quarters. Ten percent of these leavers, 71 former students, had been in the Phase I sample pool. Of those 71, 24 (34%) were Phase I respondents and 47 (66%) were Phase I nonrespondents.

The Phase IIa interviews were conducted with 42 students who had been enrolled autumn quarter 1983, but not winter quarter 1984. Phase IIb surveyed 39 students who were enrolled autumn and winter quarters, but not spring quarter 1984. Table 6 illustrates the numbers of respondents and nonrespondents to the Phase I questionnaire who where included in the Phase II interviews. This figure also indicates to which of the three sampling groups the interviewed leavers belonged.

Table 6. Phase II Sample Segmentation.

	Phase IIa		Phase IIb		
	Respondents	Nonrespondents	Respondents	Nonrespondents	TOTALS
Group 1 Nontraditional	6	4	6	12	38
Group 2 New Freshman	6	8	6	8	28
Group 3 Transfers	5	3	4	3	15
TOTALS	17	25	16	23	81

When Do Leavers Decide to Leave?

Although a few leavers have decided in advance that their stay at the University of Montana will be brief, only 28% of the Phase II interviewees had concluded within the first half of their last quarter on campus that they would not be returning during the next enrollment period. Seventy-two percent did not make such a decision until sometime into the second half of that last quarter. Twenty-three percent actually waited until finals week or quarter break before deciding not to return.

It was discovered that 20% of those interviewed had not completed their last quarter of enrollment. Of those, only one-third had formally withdrawn from the University; 65% had just walked away from campus.

Most of the leavers reported that the decision not to return was arrived at independently. Only 15% indicated that another individual had been consulted in the decision making. In all cases, that other person was either a friend or relative.

To What Do Leavers Go?

It appears that the majority of leavers (74%) do go to work. They take full-time rather than part-time jobs at a ratio of 2:1. Eighty-six percent

of those who are not working are indeed looking for employment.

It was interesting to note that the majority of these leavers do not appear to be heading straight for another school. Only 15% of the leavers were attending another school at the time of the interview. Fifty-three percent of all leavers intend to return to UM eventually; however, 26% have decided to complete their education elsewhere at some future time.

Reasons Given For Leaving

In an open-ended question, leavers were asked to report their primary reason for not reenrolling at the University. The study was able to pinpoint the fact that the typically expected "scapegoat" reasons for leaving (finances, health, and registration difficulties) were not cited as the principle ones by these leavers. What surfaced instead was a combination of personal and adjustment problems that together accounted for 42% of the primary reasons given for leaving UM. Types of responses included in these categories consisted of such reasons as:

- A need to take time away from studies for a mental rest
- A dislike of the community or of the academic life
- Dissatisfaction with night school offerings or with the general unavailability of desired classes
- Loneliness resulting from separation from a loved one
- Restlessness
- Lack of direction
- The realization of overcommitment due to preexisting family and/or employment responsibilities

Registration difficulties, finances, and work conflicts were also mentioned by leavers as reasons for going. However, they trailed far behind personal and adjustment problems, accounting for only 16%, 16% and 13% of the responses respectively.

Consequent to the open-ended question, respondents were read a series of eighteen questions designed to serve as prompts to generate any other reasons that may have existed for leaving UM. What follows is a summary of their reactions to the prompts.

- Course Relevancy -- 67% of the respondents were not dissatisfied, 48% of those who were had taken the course due to a major requirement.
- Course Availability -- 61% did not cite course unavailability as a reason for leaving. Of those who did, half indicated that was because desired classes were closed to them, half because such classes were not offered.
- Missed Classes -- 51% indicated they had missed classes during the quarter and attributed the cause to a wide variety of personal (health, family) concerns.
- Classes Too Easy? -- 85% of the leavers did not feel their UM classes were too easy. Of those who did, none attempted to take any Honors courses; also, they were equally split on whether or not a change of major was a solution.
- Classes Too Difficult? -- 89% did not believe the content of their courses was too difficult. Three-fourths of those who did spoke with their professors in regard to it, and half used tutoring services. The vast majority who experienced trouble with classes appear to have done their studying alone.
- Extent of Faculty Contact -- 79% of the leavers did not feel their contact with the faculty was too limited. The majority of those who did apparently made an effort to meet with faculty outside of class and generally during posted office hours.
- Surprised by Number of Requirements? -- The amount of required classes did not appear to be a factor for leaving to 78% of these respondents. Those who were discontented tended to believe there were too many rather than too few such classes.
- Credit Overloads -- 79% did not feel that they had tackled too many credits in a given quarter. Less than two-thirds of those who did attempted to drop any of those credits, however.
- Needed a Break -- 67% indicated this was not a significant reason for leaving. The majority of those for whom it was a reason again reinforced the earlier observation that the needed break was inspired by problems of adjustment.
- Became Interested in Another Program -- The majority did not leave for an academic program that is offered elsewhere. Only 17% cited this as a factor for going.

- Satisfaction with Advising -- Most students who left did not express dissatisfaction with academic advising experiences. Seventy-eight percent were satisfied with the quality of advising they had received. Those who were did not typically seek out the advisor other than at registration, nor did they attempt to change advisors.
- Registration Problems -- 82% reported no problems with the registration process. Those who did appeared to have problems associated with completing registration.
- Living Quarters -- 88% of the leavers had been satisfied with their place of residence while at UM. Half of those who were unhappy had attempted to change their living arrangements; the outcomes were unclear.
- Finances -- 67% did not attribute a lack of financial support to be a significant reason for leaving. Half of the 33% who did, however, had turned to the financial aid office and/or employment opportunities for a solution.
- Transportation -- 97% of the leavers did not find that commuting to and from classes was problematic.
- Family Responsibilities -- 68% of those interviewed did not have marital, parenting, or other family responsibilities while in school. However, 62% of those who did reported that the role conflicts were, to some degree, responsible for their leaving.
- Health Problems -- 90% of the leavers did not experience severe health problems while at UM. Interestingly, three-fourths of those who did reported that they did not use the student health service. They were apparently more inclined to seek out other professional services.
- Conflicts with Others -- 92% of the leavers reported no personal conflicts with anyone on campus during their term of enrollment. In those few cases where conflict arose, it appeared to more frequently be between the leaver and a member of the faculty or staff rather than with a peer. About half the time these conflicts were resolved while the student was on campus.

Leavers' Sense of Involvement with UM

At the conclusion of the telephone interviews with this group, each one was asked if he or she had participated in any extracurricular activities on campus. Only 21% had been involved to some degree with out-of-class activities. The majority had responded with an emphatic "no."

PHASE III -- TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH PERSISTERS

In June 1983, a third survey was administered to members of the original sample of 600. As with Phase II, the Phase III surveys included a sampling of both respondents and nonrespondents to Phase I. Table 7 displays the distribution of the final survey among the original three sampling groups. A total of 98 interviews were completed with students who had been first enrolled in autumn 1983 and then returned to enroll both winter and spring quarters of 1984.

Table 7. Phase III Sample Segmentation.

	Group 1 Nontraditional	Group 2 New Freshmen	Group 3 Transfers	Totals
Respondents	16	16	9	41
Nonrespondents	26	23	8	57
Totals	42	39	17	98

When questioned, 90% of the interviewees reported that they had indeed completed spring quarter. Interestingly, only half of those who withdrew actually did so formally. The others apparently merely stopped attending classes during the quarter.

Persisters were asked about their study behavior. Table 8 displays their responses to the question: "On the average (and other than during midterms and finals) how many hours per week did you study?"

Table 8. Average Hours Per Week Studying

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-9 hours	23	23.5	23.5
10-19 hours	42	42.9	66.3
20-29 hours	24	24.5	90.8
30-39 hours	6	6.1	96.9
40+ hours	2	2.0	99.0
Invalid	1	1.0	100.0
TOTALS	98	100.0	--

Greater than two-thirds of the persisters had been employed during the school year. Surprisingly, 78% of those employed had been working off campus.

Persisters' Future Plans

The majority of the persisters do intend to enroll again at UM. Eighty-two percent plan to be back as early as summer and/or autumn 1984. Eight percent have decided not to return to school at all, and 5% are uncertain about future schooling. Four percent of the persisters do plan to continue their education but at another location.

The survey sought to learn if other plans had changed for the persisters since they had first enrolled. Had these students changed major? Thirty-one percent either had or expected to change their major area of study. The 13% who had already done so had made one such official change since their arrival.

Persisters by a majority of 89% do intend to complete a degree; 87% of that group expect to do so at UM. Two-thirds of those students who do not intend to complete a degree reported that this did not reflect a change of plans, that they had never intended to do so.

The persisters were equally split on the question of whether or not they were considering studies beyond the first degree. Half of them intend to do so and half do not.

Persisters' Attitudes Toward UM

The interviewees were asked if they felt differently about UM in June of 1984 than they did when they first enrolled in September 1983. Forty-four percent of them indicated that yes, they did feel differently. The number one reason given for this was that they had come to feel more comfortable here. Actually, all of those reporting a change of attitude toward UM indicated that the change was a positive one.

To determine if persisters' attitudes toward specific aspects of campus life were similar to or different from those of leavers, the former group was asked to comment on a series of items quite like those directed at the leavers of Phase II. What follows is a summary of the persisters' responses.

- Course Relevancy -- 65% of the respondents were not dissatisfied, two-thirds of those who were had taken the course due to a major requirement.
- Course Availability -- 57% had indeed experienced the unavailability of classes. When this happened, it seemed that greater than three-fourths of the time, it was due to closed classes versus classes not offered.
- Missed Classes -- 77% reported that they had indeed missed classes while at UM. Illness accounted for a third of that, cutting classes accounted for almost another third.
- Classes Too Easy? -- 93% of the persisters did not think their courses were too easy. None of those who did had attempted to take Honors courses, and only half considered that a change of major might be in order.
- Classes Too Difficult? -- 93% did not think their courses were too demanding. Most of those who did spoke to their professors about it, and half used tutoring services. The majority who had trouble with classes appear to have done their studying alone.
- Extent of Faculty Contact -- 67% had no complaints about the extent of their contact with the faculty. Of those who had found contact too limited, 91% had attempted to meet individually with professors and almost always during posted office hours.
- Surprised by Number of Requirements? -- 72% of the persisters were not surprised by the actual number of classes required of them for their major. The majority who were indicated they thought there were too many required credits rather than too few.

- Credit Overloads -- 71% did not feel they had taken too many credits in any given quarter. About two-thirds of those who did attempted to drop credits to reduce the load.
- Satisfaction with Advising -- A majority of persisters, 78%, appeared to be satisfied with the quality of the academic advising they had received. About half of those who were dissatisfied did indeed attempt to seek out their advisor at times other than at registration, however, two-thirds of them did not attempt to change advisors.
- Registration Problems -- 91% of the interviewees did not experience any problems with the registration process. The survey was unable to pinpoint any specific trouble spot in registration from the responses of those who did have difficulty.
- Living Quarters -- 81% were satisfied with their housing arrangements while at UM. Of those who were not, a bit more than half had attempted to change those circumstances; the outcomes were unknown.
- Finances -- 68% did not experience problems with financial support while at UM. Two-thirds of those who did went to the financial aid office for help and/or sought employment during the school year.
- Transportation -- 88% experienced no difficulties commuting to and from classes.
- Family Responsibilities -- 60% of the persisters did not have marital, parenting, or other family obligations while in school. However, 64% of those who did had reported that such responsibilities did interfere with their academic responsibilities.
- Health Problems -- 83% did not experience severe health problems during the school year. Better than three-fourths of those who were ill did use the student health service. Additionally, almost half of them sought help from other professionals as well.
- Conflicts with Others -- 49% of the persisters did not appear to have had personal conflicts with another while on campus. When that did happen, it was more often with a member of the UM faculty or staff than with a peer, at a ratio of 2:1. In most of these cases, the conflict was left unresolved despite efforts on the part of the persister to seek outside counsel (usually from another member of the faculty) on the problem.

Persisters' Sense of Involvement with UM

The telephone interviewers asked the persisters if they had been involved in extracurricular activities during the school year. Thirty-eight percent of them reported that they had indeed been active to one extent or another in such things as clubs or organizations, Greek life, and athletic or cultural activities. Sixty-two percent had not been active.

Are Persisters That Happy?

Those interviewed were asked if at any time during the academic year they had considered leaving UM. A full 25% of them said "yes." They were asked what had made them decide to stay. A few indicated that they had no obvious alternatives to go to (e.g. no jobs) or that they had no funds to finance a change of circumstances. Most seemed driven to complete what they had begun -- to avoid "incompletes," wasted registration money, or personal disappointment. Sometimes the help of a friend or an advisor gave them the boost needed to keep going.

Persisters were asked if they had known anyone who had left UM during the year. More than half of them had known at least one who had gone. When asked if they knew the reasons those students had left, the most typical answers given were either finances or adjustment problem-related.

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PERSISTERS AND LEAVERS

In many ways responses obtained from the persisters to the control items did not dramatically differ from responses obtained from the leavers. Oftentimes, the group response tended to be the reverse of what might have been anticipated. Because the size of both these samples was relatively small (less than 100 respondents each) and because sampling procedures beyond the Phase I questionnaire were not truly random, conclusions drawn as to differences between groups must remain tentative. Table 9, however, does draw the reader's attention to some interesting anecdotes from the data.

Table 9. Some Differences Between Persisters and Leavers, in Response Rates to Various Items

	Percent of Leavers Answering Yes	Percent of Persisters Answering Yes
Were courses you wanted unavailable?	39%	57%
Were classes you wanted already closed?	21%	48%
Did you miss classes during your quarter(s) of enrollment?	51%	77%
Were your classes too easy?	15%	7%
Were your classes too difficult?	11%	7%
Has contact with the faculty been too limited?	20%	33%
Did the actual number of required classes come as a surprise?	20%	26%
Did you take too many credits?	21%	29%
Did you have problems with registration?	18%	9%
Were you dissatisfied with your place of residence while at UM?	12%	19%
If financial aid was a problem, did you contact the financial aid office?	52%	65%
Did transportation prove to be a problem?	7%	12%
Did you have marital, parenting, or other family responsibilities while at UM?	32%	40%
Did they conflict with school?	62%	64%
Did you experience severe health problems during the school year?	9%	17%
Did you use the student health service?	25%	82%
Did you seek out any other professional services?	75%	41%
Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities while at UM?	21%	38%

Regarding a few of these items, leavers do seem to have some legitimate reasons for going. They experience more discontent with the difficulty level of their classes than the persisters. They have more problems with registration. They are less likely than the persisters to check with the financial aid office when pressed with financial concerns. They are less likely to use the student health service when they are sick. And leavers are less likely to become involved with the campus' many extracurricular offerings.

Persisters, on the other hand, seem to show resilience in the face of adversity. If class unavailability is a reason to grow dissatisfied with an institution, our persisters seem to be experiencing that more often than our leavers. Missed classes can quickly lead to falling behind in one's studies. This, too, can discourage a student from staying. Yet persisters own up to more of this behavior than leavers. For many students, insufficient contact with the faculty leads to disenchantment with the institution. However, more of the persisters complain about faculty contact being too limited than do leavers.

Note also these other observations:

- Persisters are unhappier with their living arrangements than are leavers.
- Persisters have more problems with transportation to and from classes.
- Persisters have more outside familial responsibilities than do leavers.
- Persisters have more health problems during the school year than leavers.

Do persisters complain more loudly than leavers? Are they more demanding of the institution? Is it because they are on campus longer than the leavers that they have more time in which to potentially experience more in the way

of problems with: advisors, classes, living arrangements, transportation, family responsibilities, and health problems? Is the fact that they spend more time here the reason they become more involved in extracurricular activities? These questions remain unanswered yet provoke thoughts for further study of the retention issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the summary observations emerge several suggestions for UM's future retention effort development. First, the retention study revealed that the majority of leavers admit doing so for reasons that are related to personal and adjustment problems. The University could be doing more in the way of outreach to address and combat some of the difficulties encountered by our new (and returning) students.

Delaware State College's Project FAR (Freshman Attrition Reduction) is an excellent example of the successes that can come from outreach programs. Residence halls programming is an avenue that has not been developed on this campus, yet it has been shown to be a very successful retention device. Early identification of and intrusive advising/counseling with students who are academic or adjustment "high risks" is one effort the campus should be mounting. Freshman Orientation Classes are yet another means of outreach. The Offices of Advising and Retention can provide needed information on the logistics involved in the start up of a program such as Project FAR. The University of Montana must certainly do more to integrate new students into campus life early on.

Another area needing attention is the apparent underutilization of existing campus services and resources. Career Services and the Student Health Service are two of the units on campus that surface in the study as underutilized. Additionally, however, the counseling and psychological services units could be joining forces to provide more in the way of outreach activities to combat new student adjustment problems. It appears that there are indeed students on campus who are not challenged by their

course work and yet they are giving no consideration to our Honors program. This program may provide an answer for some who are debating whether or not to leave.

Underutilization of remedial (or developmental) resources also appears to be occurring. Two-thirds of the sample of 600 new students reported that they had taken placement tests (Freshman Skills Assessment Program) during new student orientation. Yet half of these report that they were never encouraged to enroll in remedial level courses. Our own test results summaries indicate that a good deal many more students "qualify," as a result of the FSAP, as candidates for remediation.

Students who report dissatisfaction with the quality of the academic advising they have received do not appear to initiate a change of advisors. Could it be that they are unaware that this is an option for them? Or are they uneducated as to what to legitimately expect of an advisor? The University of Montana has an advising system of which to be proud. There is no reason for students to settle for less than good advising here.

An alarming number of students who leave the University at some time during an academic quarter do not complete the formal withdrawal process. The procedure is certainly not a burdensome one. Are students ignorant of the necessary steps to take in order to avoid a series of "Fs" for the term? Or are they indifferent to the consequences, believing a retro-active withdrawal to be quite simple to acquire. If this is so, at what expense is it to those exiting students who do follow the formal procedure?

The retention study has confirmed that a problem does exist and that continued investigation of it is worthwhile. It is recommended that a continuing analysis of the existing data be undertaken to search for further

interrelationships among the responses to the three phases. It could be beneficial to determine whether different reasons for leaving appear to surface at different points during the academic year. It is also recommended that efforts continue to coordinate retention-aimed activities through a central office that has a campus-wide focus. It is suggested that further surveys of leavers be conducted by professional interviewers in an attempt to answer many of the questions raised by this preliminary project. Also, some one person should be identified as the individual who would become more involved in this kind of data analysis and report writing. It is strongly suggested that this person not be an administrator with an already hefty and divergent load of responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

DEFINITION OF PURPOSE

The initial brainstorming sessions for this research study began in the summer of 1981 when the Retention Research Committee of the University of Montana first came together to discuss issues of mutual concern. Although the membership of the committee did change somewhat from year to year, it tended to have good campus-wide representation and included vice presidents, deans, faculty members, and other assorted student affairs and academic affairs administrators.

One of the main successful projects of the committee in 1981-82 was the completion of a five-year plan for advising and retention at UM and a series of proposals which were put before the University Planning Council that winter. The UPC was impressed with the plan and with a proposal to conduct a research study that would answer questions related to students' reasons for coming to or leaving the University. The UPC granted the committee $5,800 to complete the study.

One of the misfortunes of inflation that year was the exhorbitant and unanticipated increase in costs for long distance telephone rates. Suddenly the proposed retention study looked as if it would surely go over budget should it proceed as planned. Alternative approaches to the study were reviewed, and within a year a new and affordable game plan was developed. It was determined that the director of advising and retention would serve as project director with the assistance of Dr. Larry Gianchetta of the School of Business. Three business students joined them to become the research team that would develop survey instruments for the project.

The Retention Research Committee met with the research team on several occasions to define the objectives of the study. It was determined that the study should be designed to help pinpoint programs and services on campus that were not perceived by the students as effective. By so doing, steps could be taken to improve on deficient areas. Conversely, it was expected that the study would point to campus strengths to be capitalized upon in the future. After many sessions of brainstorming, these objectives as well as the need to know what it is that attracts students to UM or draws them from it were delineated.

THE SAMPLE

It was decided that the sample include a cross-section of all students new to the University in autumn 1983. Systems analysts and programmers from the University's Computer Center were engaged to write and run a program that would randomly select a stratified random sample of new students from the registrar's student records master file. The universe of students from which the sample was drawn had a matriculation date of autumn 1983, an admission status indicating undergraduate level, and evidence of current enrollment.

Group number one contained the nontraditional, or older, returning student. These were either first quarter freshmen or transfer students with a birthdate prior to 1/1/59. Group number two were the new freshmen, nontransfers, shown to have a birthdate later than 12/31/58. Group number three contained new transfers of any undergraduate class level with a birthdate later than 12/31/58. Groups two and three included only those students who were under 25 years of age at the point of matriculation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The actual construction of the three phases of the survey was the responsibility of the research team that consisted of one undergraduate and two graduate students from the School of Business, the OAR director, and the Chair of the Department of Management. For the students, these surveys were independent study projects sponsored by the Business School.

The research team reviewed several survey instruments developed by other institutes of higher education that had previously sought to answer similar questions on student attrition and retention on their own campuses. Using some of those as models for various items and working in close cooperation with the Retention Research Committee, the student members of the team developed four working drafts of each phase of the study over the course of the 1983-84 school year. As each draft was developed it was subjected to pilot runs with cross sections of the new student population. Each such meeting resulted in further refinements of the instrument. Before the final drafts were typed, a working copy was distributed to each member of the committee for comments and suggestions. Last minute revisions were then included before the University Typing Services division put the copy together on its word processing unit.

The campus Reprographics division printed the copies of the mailed questionnaire as well as the telephone interview questionnaires. That office collated, stapled, and folded the Phase I survey and collated and stapled Phases II and III.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The processing of the mailed (Phase I) questionnaire was handled by clerical workers in the Center for Student Development who stuffed the

surveys into envelopes, applied mailing labels, and had UM's Central Mail Service forward the 600 pieces either through campus mail or the federal postal service. The questionnaire itself was accompanied by a cover letter from the research team (see appendix i) indicating that for every 100 surveys that were returned there would be a drawing for one $25 prize. Students were encouraged to return their completed questionnaires by a cutoff date in order to be eligible for these drawings. Within days of the mailing the surveys began to flow back into the OAR. Seven days after the mailing, a follow-up postcard was sent to all persons in the sample reminding them to complete and return the questionnaire in order to qualify for the drawings. When the cutoff date was reached, 340 usable questionnaires had been returned to the OAR; three $25 prizes were awarded, and the winners were notified.

At this point in the project, the services of a professional data analyst from the Bureau of Business and Economic Research was engaged. He assisted the OAR director in the coding of the many open-ended responses of the Phase I survey and then developed coding sheets for the entire instrument. Clerical employees in the Center for Student Development handled the typing of the coding sheets as well as the actual coding of the data.

At the same point in time, telephone interviewing services were secured through the Bureau of Business and Economic Research. A professional interviewing supervisor was employed to locate, train, and oversee the telephone interviews to be conducted with the leavers of Phase II and the persisters of Phase III. This supervisor convened a group of four experienced interviewers who completed the 179 usable interviews of leavers and persisters

over the course of winter and spring quarters. They were stationed at the Center for Student Development where a bank of telephones was available to them.

As the Phase II and III interviews were completed, the data analyst developed coding sheets for them. A coder was hired to furnish that step of the project which was then submitted for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The services of UM's Computer Center were called upon to enter the coded data into a working area of the University's mainframe system. Data from the coding sheets of all three phases was entered and rechecked for accuracy. The data analyst constructed a database management system with the 1022 software program. His purpose was to reclaim from the registrar's student records master file some demographic data on the sample of 600 that was desired for analysis yet was not collected as a specific task of the questionnaires themselves. He then used a statistical package, SPSSX, to analyze data from both the 1022 file as well as from the file of the coded responses to the three survey instruments. Because of time constraints imposed by the closing of the fiscal year (and the subsequent dissolution of the balance of the UPC grant) as well as the departure from the campus of the project director, data analysis consisted primarily of straight (vs. cross) tabulations.

REPORT WRITING

The project director and the chair of the Department of Management reviewed the frequency tables from the output and discussed at length the presentation of the report. Samples of other project reports were reviewed

to serve as models. An outline of significant sections of the report was constructed. Observations from the data analysis were noted and resultant recommendations were compiled. The project director completed the actual writing of the report in close collaboration with the management chair. The final product was professionally retyped, submitted to Reprographics for reproduction and binding, and distributed to the University of Montana community through its central administration in August 1984.

Appendix i

Phase I Survey Instrument

University of Montana
The Academic Advising Office • Missoula, Montana 59812 • (406) 243-2835

December 2, 1983

Dear Student:

Is a few minutes of your time worth a chance at winning $25.00? If so, please read on to learn why you are being contacted today and what you must do to possibly win this money.

We are a team of three students and one staff member who have been charged with the responsibility of conducting a research study for the University of Montana. The study will help us to learn why students come to UM and why they leave. The University wants to provide an educational atmosphere that is responsive to its students' needs and plans to use these research findings to make appropriate changes. Your name has been randomly selected from those of students new to UM. We want your impressions of this University.

When we designed the enclosed questionnaire, we enlisted the help of a good cross-section of students in order to make the end product as relevant to you as possible. Your honest and specific responses to these questions will ensure that the study's results will have a positive impact on student services here.

Also, we want to assure you that your responses are completely confidential. The study team members are the only persons who will read the returned questionnaires; your name will never be associated with any specific response.

Please take 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope by December 16th. Upon receiving it we will detach your name and include it in the "drawing pool." For every 100 questionnaires completed and returned to us, we will draw one name and issue a $25.00 check to that person. Your chances to win increase with every questionnaire that's returned! And, you need not be present to win--just be sure to mail the completed questionnaire by December 16, 1983.

We sincerely appreciate your help with this research project. Your insights, observations, and impressions can make a difference. If you have any questions, you may call Jon Stannard at (406) 243-5033 or Kitty Corak at (406) 243-2835. We'll be glad to speak with you.

Respectfully,

Regina Hepp, UM Student

Kitty Corak, Advising Coordinator

Denise Mitchell, UM Graduate Student

Jon Stannard, UM Graduate Student

Equal Opportunity in Education and Employment

Please take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire.

Name: _____
Last First Middle Initial

1. UM Student Identification Number: _____

2. Marital Status (Check one):

_____ single

_____ single parent

_____ married, no children

_____ married, with children

_____ other _____ (specify)

3. In what year did you receive your high school diploma or the equivalent (i.e., GED)?

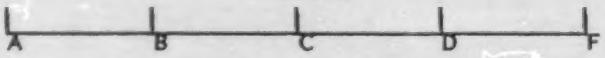
year received high school diploma: _____

year received equivalent: _____

4. Which city/town did you live in or nearest to when you received this diploma or the equivalent?

_____ _____
(city/town state)

5. Please rank your overall high school grade performance using the following scale (place an "x" at the appropriate spot on the line):



6. Based on your high school performance, which skill areas would you expect to have difficulties with in college? (Check all that apply.)

_____ reading

_____ writing

_____ mathematics

_____ natural sciences

_____ other(s) _____ (specify)

7. What is your UM status fall quarter 1983? (Please check one.)

_____ Former UM Student (have previously attended UM)

_____ New Student (have not previously attended any 2- or 4-year college or university)

_____ Transfer Student (have previously attended a 2- or 4-year college or university other than UM)

8. What is your academic major? (Example: Anthropology, Business, General, Sociology, Wildlife Biology.)

_____

9. Did either of your parent(s)/legal guardian(s) graduate from a four-year educational institution (i.e., college or university)?

_____ yes
_____ no
_____ do not know

If "yes," did either parent(s)/legal guardian(s) graduate from the University of Montana?

_____ yes
_____ no

10. Where are you living fall quarter 1983? (Please check one.)

_____ UM residence halls
_____ UM family housing
_____ off-campus, within 10 miles
_____ off-campus, beyond 10 miles

11. Would you choose the same living arrangement again?

_____ yes
_____ no

12. Please state your reason(s) for answering question #11 as you did:

13. Did you pay in-state tuition fall quarter 1983?

_____ yes
_____ no

If no, skip to question #15

14. Did you apply to any out-of-state colleges or universities?

_____ yes

If yes, skip to question #15

_____ no

For what reason(s) did you select the University of Montana over the other colleges and universities in the Montana University System? (Please state your reason(s).)

GO TO #16

15. For what reason(s) did you select the University of Montana?

16. Can you identify any one person who had the greatest influence on your decision to attend the University of Montana in fall quarter 1983?

_____ yes
_____ no _____ [If no, skip to question #19]

17. What relationship is that one person to you? (Please check one.)

_____ parent
_____ other relative
_____ high school teacher
_____ high school counselor
_____ high school friend
_____ other friend
_____ UM admissions officer
_____ other: _____ (specify)

18. Did that person who most influenced you ever attend the University of Montana?

_____ yes
_____ no
_____ do not know

19. Please indicate those people who had some influence on your decision to attend the University of Montana. (Check all that apply.)

_____ parent(s)
_____ other relative(s)
_____ high school teacher(s)
_____ high school counselor(s)
_____ high school friend(s)
_____ other friend(s)
_____ UM admissions officer(s)
_____ other: _____ (specify)

20. Did you at anytime during fall quarter 1983 seek employment?

_____ yes
_____ no _____ [If no, skip to question #24]

21. During fall quarter 1983, were you (or have you been) employed either part-time or full-time?

_____ yes
_____ no _____ [If no, skip to question #24]

22. Where were you (or have you been) employed? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ on campus, work-study
_____ on campus, non work-study
_____ off campus, work-study
_____ off campus, non work-study

23. How many hours of employment have you averaged each week? (Please check one.)

_____ 1 - 10 hours per week
_____ 11 - 20 hours per week
_____ 21 - 35 hours per week
_____ more than 35 hours per week

24. Did you visit the campus prior to your registration for fall quarter 1983?

_____ no
_____ yes

For what occasions: (Please check all that apply.)

_____ "UM Days"
_____ "Summer Orientation"
_____ "Fall Orientation
_____ Collegiate Athletic Events (i.e. Grizzly sports)
_____ High School Athletic Events (i.e. tournaments)
_____ Performing Arts (i.e. concerts, theatric productions)
_____ Informal visit(s) with friend(s) or relative(s)
_____ Campus visit sponsored by the Admissions Office
_____ Departmental programs for high school students (i.e. "Music Days," "Foreign Language Days," etc.)
_____ Other: _____ (specify)

25. What is the name of your academic advisor? (Please leave blank if you cannot remember.)

_____

26. How often have you talked with your academic advisor during fall quarter 1983? (Please check one.)

_____ I have not talked with my advisor → SKIP TO #28
_____ 1 time
_____ 2 times
_____ 3 or more times

27. Please indicate your feelings for each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

	Least Accurate → Most Accurate				
a. My advisor helps me define and develop realistic goals...	1	2	3	4	5
b. My advisor identifies special needs and suggests other people or offices from whom I can seek help...	1	2	3	4	5
c. My advisor helps with course scheduling...	1	2	3	4	5
d. My advisor discusses linkage between academic preparation and career opportunities...	1	2	3	4	5
e. My advisor seems relaxed during our meetings...	1	2	3	4	5
f. My advisor makes me feel comfortable during our meetings.	1	2	3	4	5

Least Accurate → Most Accurate

g. My advisor encourages me to ask questions.....1 2 3 4 5

h. My advisor has been easy to see.....1 2 3 4 5

i. My advisor helped me pick courses appropriate to my abilities and needs.....1 2 3 4 5

j. My advisor has the final say as to which classes I will take.....1 2 3 4 5

k. Having a good advisor to work with is important to me....1 2 3 4 5

l. Overall, I consider my advisor a good advisor.....1 2 3 4 5

28. Did you take any of the Placement Tests (Nelson-Denny Reading, Writing Sample, Math Placement) prior to registration?

_____ yes

_____ no

Do you believe the test results are an accurate reflection of your abilities?

_____ yes

_____ no

Why not?

29. Has anyone recommended that you enroll in any of the following classes? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ Education 002 "Increasing Reading Effectiveness"

_____ Education 195 "Study Skills for College"

_____ English 102 Developmental Composition"

_____ Math 001 "Arithmetic"

_____ Math 002 "Introductory Algebra"

_____ None of the above

30. In which of the following classes did you or will you enroll? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ Education 002 "Increasing Reading Effectiveness"

_____ Education 195 "Study Skills for College"

_____ English 102 "Developmental Composition"

_____ Math 001 "Arithmetic"

_____ Math 002 "Introductory Algebra"

_____ None of the above

31. Had you attempted to enroll in any of the following classes but found you could not do so because the sections were closed? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ Education 002 "Increasing Reading Effectiveness"

_____ Education 195 "Study Skills for College"

_____ English 102 "Developmental Composition"

_____ Math 001 "Arithmetic"

_____ Math 002 "Introductory Algebra"

_____ None of the above

32. Below are several factors that are typically given as reasons for selecting the University of Montana. Read through the entire list and then circle those THREE factors that were the most influential in your decision to come to the University of Montana.

A. High School teacher's advice

B. High School counselor's advice

C. Former UM student's advice

D. Family member's advice

E. This is a university rather than a college or a junior college

F. Costs of getting an education at UM relative to the other schools I had considered.

G. Academic reputation of UM

H. Easy commuting distance from my home

I. Distance from my home made me feel like I was "going away" to college

J. Availability of financial aid

K. Will help me retain my job or improve my work skills

L. Range and availability of student services

M. Academic major

N. Geographic location of Missoula

O. Size of student body

P. Missoula community

Q. Physical appearance of the campus

R. Other _____
(specify)

33. Reflecting back on your varied experiences at the University of Montana this fall quarter, what particular experience do you feel was most rewarding? (Please explain.)

34. Reflecting back on those same experiences, what particular experience was most unfavorable? (Please explain.)

35. Are you beginning to develop a sense of involvement here at the University of Montana? (Please explain.)

36. Listed below are offices on campus with which you may have some familiarity. Please check the appropriate corresponding columns for each one.

	Check here if you have used this office	Check here if you found the people in this office helpful	Check here if you found the people in this office not helpful
Academic Department Office (Department for your major)			
Advising Office, Lodge			
Admissions Office, Lodge			
Career Services Office, Lodge			
Center for Student Development Counseling Office, Lodge			
Dean's Office (Dean of your Major)			
Financial Aid Office, Lodge			
Food Service Office, Lodge			
Housing Office, Turner Hall			
Reading Lab, Main Hall			
Registrar's Office, Lodge			
Special Services Office, Arthur and Beckwith			
Tutoring Office, Lodge			

37. Please check all sources of support you applied for and/or are receiving fall quarter 1983.

Applied For	Financial Aid Programs	Receiving
_____	grants (BEOG, PELL, BIA, SEOG)	_____
_____	loans (federal, state)	_____
_____	scholarships	_____
_____	work study jobs	_____
_____	other _____ (specify)	_____
	Others	
	benefits (veteran, social security, welfare)	_____
	aid from spouse	_____
	child support	_____
	non work-study job	_____
	personal loans	_____
	savings	_____
	support from parents	_____
	other _____ (please specify)	_____

38. Will your parent(s)/legal guardian(s) claim you as an income tax exemption on their 1983 federal tax forms? (Check one.)

_____ yes
_____ no ——— If no, skip to question #40
_____ do not know

39. Please approximate your parent(s)/legal guardian(s) total personal income before taxes (i.e. gross income).

_____ less than $5000
_____ $5000 - $9999
_____ $10,000 - $14,999
_____ $15,000 - $19,999
_____ $20,000 - $24,999
_____ $25,000 - $29,999
_____ $30,000 - $34,999
_____ $35,000 - $39,999
_____ $40,000 - $44,999
_____ $45,000 - $49,999
_____ $50,000 - or more
_____ do not know

40. Please approximate your total personal income before taxes (i.e. gross income) in 1983. If you will be filing a joint tax return, include your partner's income in this total. (Check one)

_____ less than $3,000
_____ $3,000 - $5,999
_____ $6,000 - $8,999
_____ $9,000 - $11,999
_____ $12,000 - $14,999
_____ $15,000 - $17,999
_____ $18,000 - $20,999
_____ $21,000 - $23,999
_____ $24,000 - $29,000
_____ $30,000 or more
_____ do not know

Thank you for the time you have given to complete this survey. Please return it in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope by December 16, 1983. We appreciate your help and will enter your name in the drawing for the $25.00 prizes.

Appendix ii

Phase II Survey Instrument

RESPONDENTS

Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. Last December, _____ participated in a survey of
(full name)
students at UM. The information (he/she) volunteered was of great value and we were hoping (he/she) could assist us with a few follow-up questions.

1. Is _____ there now?
(full name)

_____yes, this is (he/she) _____

_____, I'm sure you recall our tan-colored, 9-page questionnaire? (If not, prompt until they remember...if they question about the $25 winners, tell them who won!
(first name)
1. Sharon J. Davis
2. Denise H. Ernst
3. Larry D. Fox)

Do you have a couple of minutes now to answer a few more questions?

_____yes (go to #3)

_____no--- Is there a better time to call?
_____yes _____ (time)
_____no (terminate call)

_____no___Could I reach (him/her) at this number at another time?
_____yes _____ (terminate call)
(time)
_____no _____ _____ (terminate call)
(reason) (additional phone no.)

_____yes, (he/she) is here. (go to #2)

2. Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. Last December you completed a tan-colored, 9-page questionnaire requesting student information. We were hoping you would answer a few follow-up questions for us. (prompt them to remember if they do not recall the study)

_____no_____Is there a better time to call? _____yes _____ _____no (terminate call)
(time)

_____yes (go to #3)

NONRESPONDENTS

Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. We are interviewing a number of students who were enrolled at the University last fall but who are not presently on campus. _____ (Full Name) is one of the students we are trying to reach.

1. Is (Mr/Ms. Last Name (full name) there right now?

_____Yes, this is (he/she). _____ (First Name), the University is anxious to better understand the reasons students have for leaving campus after they first enroll here. You are one of many students who did not return after autumn quarter. I'd like to ask you a few questions about what you are doing now, what your future plans are, and what your reasons were for not returning to UM in winter quarter. Do you have a couple of minutes now to answer a few questions?

_____yes. (go to #3)

_____no Is there a better time to call?
_____Yes _____ (time)
_____No (terminate call)

_____Yes, he/she is here. (go to #2)

_____no Could I reach (him/her) at this number at another time?
_____Yes _____ (time) (terminate call)
_____No _____ (reason) _____ (additional phone no.) (terminate call)

2. Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. The University is anxious to better understand the reasons students have leaving campus after they first enroll here. You are one of many students who did not return after autumn quarter. I'd like to ask you a few questions about what you are doing now, what your future plans are, and what your reasons were for not returning to UM in winter quarter. Do you have a couple of minutes not to answer a few questions?

_____Yes. (go to #3)

_____No Is there a better time to call? _____yes (time)
_____no (terminate call)

3. Great, _____, this should only take a few minutes, so let's get started.
(first name)
You are one of many students who were enrolled at UM autumn quarter but who did not return for winter quarter. I'd like to ask you a few questions about what you're doing now, what your future plans are, and what your reasons were for not returning to UM in winter quarter. Your answers will remain confidential. To the best of your knowledge, when did you decide not to return for Winter Quarter at UM? (prompt)

_____prior to Fall Quarter (pre-determined)
_____registration week--Fall Quarter
_____first 3 weeks of Winter Quarter
_____first half--September 20 - October 31
_____second half--November 1 - December 8
_____finals week--Fall Quarter
_____Christmas break

4. Did you complete Fall Quarter?

_____no _____

_____yes

Did you formally withdraw through the Center for Student Development or the Health Service?
_____yes _____no

5. Can you think of any particular person who helped you decide not to return for Winter Quarter?

_____no

_____yes_____

What relationship was that person to you?

_____
(relationship)

6. We would like to get a sense of what you are presently doing. (prompt:)

- Are you working?

_____no

_____yes_____

_____ full-time

_____ part-time

- Are you looking for a job?

_____no

_____yes

- Are you attending school?

_____no

_____yes_____

_____full-time

_____part-time

Where are you going to school now?

_____
(name of school, place)

- Are you typically involved in or with anything else these days?

_____nothing

_____primarily caring for home or children

_____military

_____other _____
(please specify)

7. What are your <u>future</u> school plans?

_____do not plan to return to college/university

_____plan to enroll in another school _____
(institution)

_____plan to return to UM within one year
_____plant to return to UM eventually
_____not sure

8. _____, we're anxious to know why students leave UM. What was your
(first name)
primary reason for not returning to UM Winter Quarter?

_____
(first reason)

And are there other reasons?

_____
(second reason)

_____
(third reason)

9. I'm now going to go through a list of reasons students often give for not returning to school. Let's see if some of these apply to you.

a) Did any of your courses seem irrelevant or disinteresting to you?

_____no
_____yes_____

- One or more?
  _____one
  _____more than one

- Why did you take the course(s)?

  _____
  (please specify)

b) Were courses that you wanted to take unavailable to you?

_____no
_____yes

- Was it because the course(s) you wanted were already closed when you registered?
  _____yes
  (elaboration)_____
  _____no
- Might it have been because you wanted to enroll in classes that were not offered?
  _____yes — Which?_____
  _____no

c) Did you miss classes during the quarter?

_____no
_____yes

- What caused that?

  _____
  (please specify)
- How many classes per week did you typically miss?

  _____
  (please specify)

d) In general, did you feel the University courses you took were too easy for you?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you attempt to enroll in any Honors courses?
  _____no
  (elaboration)_____
  _____yes
- Did you consider changing your major?
  _____no
  (elaboration)_____
  _____yes

e) In general, do you feel your contact with the faculty was too limited?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you ever attempt to individually meet with a professor?
  _____no
  _____yes — Was this during posted office hours?
    _____no
    (elaboration)_____
    _____yes _____

f) _____, did the actual number of required classes in your major come as
(first name)
a surprise to you?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you think there were too few _____ or too many _____?
- Was the UM Catalog your chief source of information?

_____no

What or whom did you really upon?
_____
(please specify)

_____yes

g) Overall, did you find that the course material was too difficult for you?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you speak with your professors about it?
_____no _____yes
_____
(elaboration)
- Did you use any of the tutoring services?
_____no _____yes
_____
(elaboration)
- Did you usually study alone _____ or with a friend _____?
(alone) (friend)

h) Did you sign up for so many credits that you got behind in your studies?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you attempt to reduce your course load by dropping credits?
_____no
_____yes

How many credits did you drop? _____
(please specify)

i) Did you leave because you felt you just needed a break from studying?

_____no
_____yes

- Could you tell me more about that? _____
_____
(reason)

j) Did you become interested in an academic program that is not offered at UM?

_____no
_____yes

- How did you learn of the program? _____
(please specify)

k) Are you satisfied with the quality of the academic advising you received?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you seek help from your advisor at times other than registration?
  _____no _____yes
  How many times? _____ (number)
- Did you attempt to change your advisor?
  _____no _____yes

_____ (elaboration)

- Did you refer to the UM Catalog in planning your academic schedule?
  _____no _____yes

l) Did you have any problems registering, for example, dropping or adding classes, or with billing procedures?

_____no
_____yes

- What specifically? _____

_____ (reason)

m) Were you dissatisfied with your place of residence during Fall Quarter?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you attempt to change your living arrangements?
  _____yes (elaboration)_____

_____no

Could you tell me a little more about that?

_____

n) Was a lack of financial support a problem for you?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you contact the Financial Aid Office? _____no _____yes

_____ (elaboration)

- Did you seek any employment during Fall Quarter?
  _____no _____yes _____ (elaboration)

o) Did transportation prove to be a problem for you?

_____no
_____yes

- How far did you live from campus? (prompt:)

_____within walking distance?
_____driving distance?

p) Did you have family, marriage, or parenting responsibilities during Fall Quarter?

_____no
_____yes

- Did they conflict with your responsibilities as a student?
  _____no _____yes _____somewhat

q) Did you experience any severe health problems during Fall Quarter?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you use the Student Health Service?
  _____no _____yes

  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did you seek out any other professional services?
  _____no _____yes

  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did health problems cause you to miss any classes?
  _____no
  _____yes____ How many per week? _____
  (number)

r) Did you experience any personal conflicts with anyone on campus during Fall Quarter?

_____no
_____yes

- With whom was that? (prompt:)
  _____UM faculty or staff
  _____peer(s)

  _____
  (elaboration)
- Were they (Was it) resolved?
  _____no _____yes

  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did you seek advice from other persons on what to do?
  _____no
  _____yes

  What was that person's relationship to you?

  _____
  (specify)

s) Did you participate in any extracurricular activities during Fall Quarter, for example, plays, clubs or organizations, campus ministry, intramurals?

_____no _____yes (very emphatic) _____somewhat

t) Have you thought of any other reasons for leaving that I might not have mentioned here?

_____no

_____yes_____

What comes to mind?_____
(specify)

_____

_____, thank you for your time. Just as a reminder, let me add that
(first name)
your answers will remain confidential. We greatly appreciate your help. Thanks again! Goodbye.

Appendix iii

Phase III Survey Instrument

RESPONDENTS

Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. Last December, _____ participated in a survey of
(full name)
students at UM. The information (he/she) volunteered was of great value and we were hoping (he/she) could assist us with a few follow-up questions.

1. Is _____ there now?
(full name)

_____yes, this is (he/she)_____

_____, Do you recall completing our tan-colored, 9-page questionnaire requesting student information last December? (If not, prompt until they remember...if they question about the $25 winners, tell them who won!
(first name)
1. Sharon J. Davis
2. Denise H. Ernst
3. Larry D. Fox)

We were hoping you would answer a few follow-up questions for us. Do you have a couple of minutes now?

_____yes (go to #3)

_____no → Is there a better time to call?
_____yes _____
(time)
_____no (terminate call)

_____no___Could I reach (him/her) at this number at another time?
_____yes _____ (terminate call)
(time)
_____no _____ _____ (terminate call)
(reason) (additional phone no.)

_____yes, (he/she) is here. (go to #2)

2. Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. Last December you completed a tan-colored, 9-page questionnaire requesting student information. We were hoping you would answer a few follow-up questions for us. (prompt them to remember if they do not recall the study) Do you have a couple of minutes now?

_____no_____Is there a better time to call? _____yes _____ _____no (terminate call)
(time)

_____yes (go to #3)

NONRESPONDENTS

Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. We are interviewing a number of students who were enrolled at the University this last year. _____ (Full Name) one of the students we are trying to reach.

1. Is (Mr./Ms. Last Name there right now?
(~~full~~ name)

_____Yes, this is (he/she). _____, the University is interested (First Name) in knowing what kind of impressions it makes on students and how those may affect students' decisions regarding their own futures. I'd like to ask you a few questions in this regard, about what you are doing now, and what your future plans are. Do you have a couple of minutes now to answer a few questions?

_____yes. (go to #3)

_____no___ Is there a better time to call?
_____Yes _____ (time)
_____No (terminate call)

_____Yes, he/she is here. (go to #2)

_____no___Could I reach (him/her) at this number at another time?
_____Yes _____ (terminate call)
(time)
_____No _____ _____ (terminate call)
(reason) (additional phone no.)

2. Hello, I'm calling for the Offices of Advising and Retention at the University of Montana. The University is interested in knowing what kind of impressions it makes on students and how those may affect students' decisions regarding their own futures. I'd like to ask you a few questions in this regard. Do you have a couple of minutes now to answer a few questions?

_____Yes. (go to #3)

_____No___ Is there a better time to call? _____yes
(time)
_____no (terminate call)

Name: _____

SS#: _____

List: _____

Respondent _____ Nonrespondent _____

3. Great, _____, this should only take a few minutes, so let's get started.
(first name)

You are one of many students who have been attending the University since Fall Quarter who are being contacted at this time. I would like to assure you that your answers will remain confidential.

(First name) _____, what are your immediate school plans? (Check all that apply.)

_____ plan to enroll in any summer session this year

_____ at UM
_____ at another institution
where _____?

_____ plan to enroll for Fall Quarter

_____ at UM
_____ at another institution
where _____?

_____ do not plan to return to a college or university.

Why?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Go to #6

_____ not sure:

4. Did you complete Spring Quarter?

_____no _____

Did you formally withdraw through the Center for Student Development or the Health Service?
_____yes _____no

_____yes

5. Have you officially changed your major this year?

_____no

Do you anticipate such a change?
_____ No _____ Yes

_____yes

How many times?
_____

6. Is it your intention to complete a degree?

_____no

Does this reflect a change of plans since you first enrolled? _____ No _____ Yes

_____yes

At the University of Montana?
_____ No _____Yes

7. Are you considering studies beyond the first bachelor's degree?

_____no

_____yes

8. In regard to your plans for furthering your education, have they changed at all since you first enrolled at UM last September?

_____no

_____yes

(elaboration)

9. Were you employed during the school year?

_____no

_____yes

_____on campus
_____off campus
_____hours per week

10. On the average, how many hours per week did you study? (Other than during midterms or finals.)

_____ none or rarely
_____ 1 - 9 hours per week
_____ 10 - 19 hours per week
_____ 20 - 29 hours per week
_____ 30 - 39 hours per week
_____ 40+ hours per week

11. Do you feel differently about the University now than you did last September?

_____no

_____yes_____

Could you tell me more about that?

_____
(first reason)

_____
(second reason)

_____
(third reason)

12. I'm now going to go through a list of questions designed to reflect your impressions of the University.

a) Have any of your courses seemed irrelevant or disinteresting to you?

_____no
_____yes_____

- One or more?
  _____one
  _____more than one
- Why did you take the course(s)?

_____
(please specify)

b) Were courses that you wanted to take unavailable to you?

_____no
_____yes_____

- Was it because the course(s) you wanted were already closed when you registered?
  _____yes
  (elaboration)_____
  _____no
- Might it have been because you wanted to enroll in classes that were not offered?
  _____yes_____ Which?_____
  _____no

c) Did you miss classes during any of the quarters?

_____no
_____yes

- What caused that?

_____
(please specify)

- How many classes per week did you typically miss?

_____
(please specify)

d) In general, have you felt the University courses you took were too easy for you?

_____no
_____yes

- Have you attempted to enroll in any Honors courses?

_____no
(elaboration)_____
_____yes

- Have you considered changing your major?

_____no
(elaboration)_____
_____yes

e) In general, have you felt your contact with the faculty has been too limited?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you ever attempt to individually meet with a professor?

_____no
_____yes

Was this during posted office hours?

_____no
(elaboration)_____
_____yes

f) _____, did the actual number of required classes in your major come as
(first name)
a surprise to you?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you think there were too few _____or too many_____?

- Has the UM Catalog been your chief source of information?

_____no

What or whom did you really upon?

_____
(please specify)

_____yes

g) Overall, have you found that the course material was too difficult for you?

_____no
_____yes

- Have you ever spoken with your professors about it?
  _____no _____yes
  _____
  (elaboration)
- Have you ever used any of the tutoring services?
  _____no _____yes
  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did you usually study alone _____ or with a friend _____?
  (alone) (friend)

h) Did you at any time sign up for so many credits that you got behind in your studies?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you attempt to reduce your course load by dropping credits?
  _____no
  _____yes — How many credits did you drop? _____
  (please specify)

i) Are you satisfied with the quality of the academic advising you have received?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you seek help from your advisor at times other than registration?
  _____no _____yes — How many times? _____
  (number)
- Did you attempt to change your advisor?
  _____no _____yes
  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did you refer to the UM Catalog in planning your academic schedule?
  _____no _____yes

j) Have you had any problems registering, for example, dropping or adding classes, or with billing procedures?

_____no
_____yes

- What specifically? _____
  _____
  (reason)

k) Have you been dissatisfied with your place of residence at any time during the school year?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you attempt to change your living arrangements?
  _____yes (elaboration)_____
  _____no
  Could you tell me a little more about that?
  _____

l) Was a lack of financial support a problem for you this last school year?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you contact the Financial Aid Office? _____no _____yes
  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did you seek any employment during the year?
  _____no _____yes _____
  (elaboration)

m) Did transportation prove to be a problem for you?

_____no
_____yes

- How far were you living from campus? (prompt:)
  _____within walking distance?
  _____driving distance?

n) Have you had any family, marriage, or parenting responsibilities during the school year?

_____no
_____yes

- Did they conflict with your responsibilities as a student?
  _____no _____yes _____somewhat

o) Did you experience any severe health problems during the school year?

_____no
_____yes

- Did you use the Student Health Service?
  _____no _____yes
  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did you seek out any other professional services?
  _____no _____yes
  _____
  (elaboration)
- Did health problems cause you to miss any classes?
  _____no
  _____yes____ How many per week? _____
  (number)

p) Did you experience any personal conflicts with anyone on campus this school year?

_____no
_____yes

- With whom was that? (prompt:)
  _____UM faculty or staff
  _____peer(s)

_____
(elaboration)

- Were they (Was it) resolved?
  _____no _____yes

_____
(elaboration)

- Did you seek advice from other persons on what to do?
  _____no
  _____yes

  What was that person's relationship to you?

  _____
  (specify)

q) Have you participated in any extracurricular activities during the school year, for example, plays, clubs or organizations, campus ministry, intramurals?

_____no _____yes (very emphatic) _____somewhat

13. Did you at any time during the 1983-84 academic year consider leaving the University?

_____no

_____yes

What made you decide to stay?

14. Do you know anyone who did leave UM during this last school year?

_____no

_____yes

For what reasons did that person leave?

_____, thank you for your time. Your information is valuable. Of course, your
(first name)
answers will remain confidential. We appreciate your help. Thanks! Goodbye.